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SUBJECT: GHOR: ALL ELECTIONERRING IS LOCAL

¶1. (SBU) As the election campaign in Ghor kicks off, Governor Sayed Iqbal Munib appears to be campaigning for President Karzai. Munib began a flurry of travel throughout the province in early June, visiting three districts in 10 days, twice with Lithuanian PRT members. According to PRT officers, Independent Election Commission (IEC) and UNAMA officials, his appeals vary from soft reminders that people should remember the people "who are in government and helping you now" to direct mentions of Karzai - though these direct appeals have been out of earshot of press or PRT officials.

¶2. (SBU) Coordination between the governor's office and the IEC on security matters is moving slowly. The governor's office appears to be avoiding the IEC, shrugging off IEC and PRT suggestions to convene a meeting between the IEC and Afghan National Security Forces to work out a provincial security plan. For several weeks, Munib has promised that a plan would be agreed upon, but as of June 23 no official meetings have been held to discuss the issue.

¶3. (SBU) There has been little Provincial Council campaign activity thus far. Other than standard IEC election posters and the occasional picture of PC candidates in car windshields, there are few visual reminders that it is election season. More than half of Ghor's PC members (8 of 15) are not running for re-election. Two of them told PRT officer that their experience as PC members was unsatisfying, and felt that they lacked real authority. They complained that it was their job to listen to peoples' problems and work with the governor to resolve them, but that the governor rarely came through and it was the PC that had to deliver the bad news to their constituents.

¶4. (SBU) PRT officer has heard chatter among local residents and election officials anticipating that some PC candidates will mobilize people from their districts to interfere with the voting and ballot counting on election day to secure a victory, but there has been no concrete evidence of fraud thus far. More than one Provincial Council candidate has pressured the provincial election official (PEO) to get friends appointed as District Field Coordinators (DFC), who are theoretically charged with preventing fraud. One PC Candidate, Mohammad Sharif Ramuzi, even went over the Ghor PEO's head and lobbied the IEC headquarters in Kabul for a special appointment. He couched his request as a complaint that no Hazaras were chosen as DFCs in Ghor. However, the friend he recommended for DFC had failed his interview - and was not Hazara himself. It appears that the IEC has held firm so far in the face of pressure, at both the local and national levels.

¶5. (U) The administrative work of the local IEC office appears on track to hire civic society educators and election staff and is finalizing its district field coordinators. The Ghor PEO, who is competent and engaged, reports that communications equipment are adequate.

EIKENBERRY